Depot Town Rag

Volume 21, Number 2

May/June 2006

NEXT ISSUE: The real history of Frog Island, warts and all

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

The parking situation: Put your wheels here

"Near the depot you can park; see Frog Island after dark," says the popular neighborhood song. But just how many parking spaces are there really in this small commerical district?

• **On the streets** - 24 spaces with no parking meters. Store employees actually park farther away, giving their clients the benefit of parking in front of the shop. That way, we see ten or more cars a day using each spot.

• **Frog Island parking lot** - 71 spaces stretching down Rice Street from Cross Street to Forest Avenue.

• **The Market Plaza—around the Freighthouse and Caboose** - 48 creative parking proliferates in what was once a railroad loading yard.

• **At the depot** - 63 spaces from the depot to Michigan Ladder Company. The district's newest public lot is paved, striped, lighted, and posted. Do not attempt to cross the railroad tracks; follow the sidewalks and come back safely. **Sub Total:** 216

• **But wait; there's more!** Behind the businesses. Many business have developed their own parking spaces on private property for their customers and these opportunities are clearly marked at seven different locations in the district.

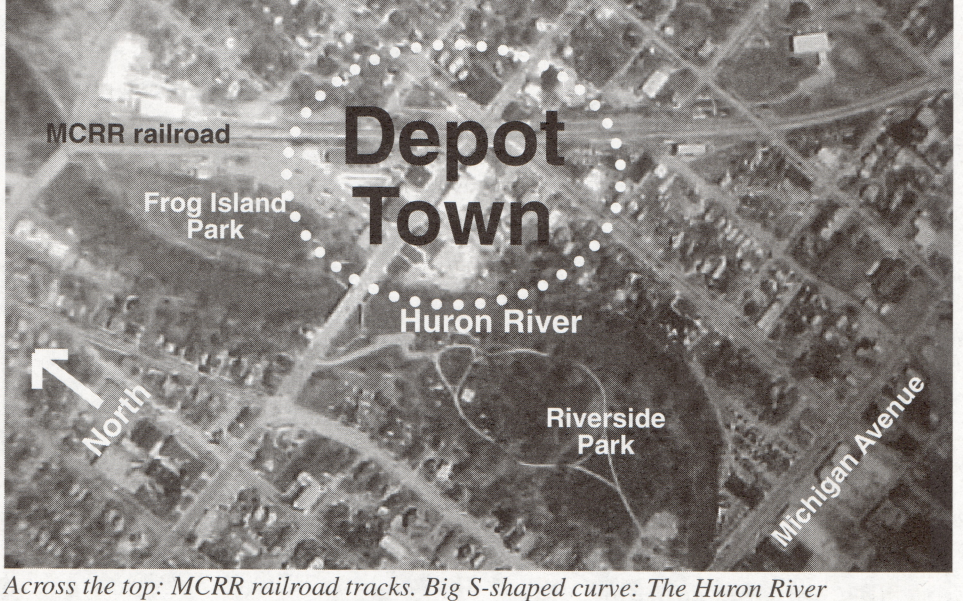
• **Except on Thursday nights**. Go figure: on Cruise Nights, dozens of cars are displayed on East Cross Street, eliminating parking spaces for those who come down to see them. Amazingly, the hundreds of old car fans seem to easily find a parking place and get out there and schmooze with the car exhibitors anyway. What's a city planner to do?

• **No dockage yet**. Sorry; no boat tie-ups are available at either Riverside or Frog Island Parks, but an occasional canoe or kayak comes through on the way to Ford Lake. French-like *voyageurs* stopped here for Huron River Day recently and they just pulled their 35-foot-long canoes up onto the grass and came down the block for a beer.

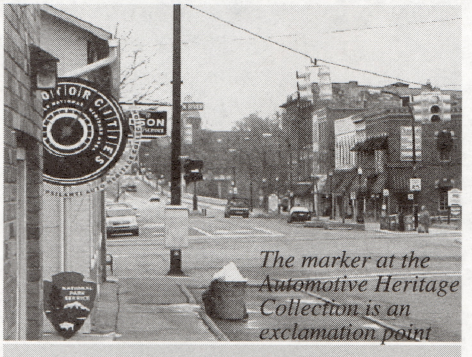
Upstream traffic has seen a small hovercraft, but it roared against the current toward the Athens of the Midwest. It's upstream all the way.

Down between the river and the railroad tracks

1980s aerial photo from City Manager Ed Koryzno's conference room



Across the top: MCRR railroad tracks. Big S-shaped curve: The Huron River
Left to right: Frog Island, Depot Town, Riverside Park, Michigan Avenue



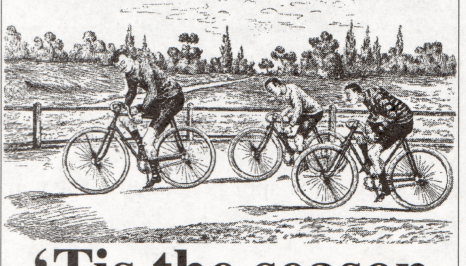
The marker at the Automotive Heritage Collection is an exclamation point

National Park's Motor Cities designation is well earned by Ypsilanti

Apex, Ace, Tucker, Corvair, Hudson; these auto brands are still found in this old block. This neighborhood is into wheels, whether they be on cars, trucks, trains, or bikes. We like things that roll *and* rock 'n' roll.

The summer season finds thousands coming down to the district for the automotive museums, car shows, cruise nights, festivals, and happy traffic jams. Don't we love it!

The Good Old Days are still here in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town.



'Tis the season for bicycles

Watch out for folks on bikes.
Drive* bikes in the *street
with the same rules as *autos*;
***Walk* them on the side*walk*.**
And *park* your bike *artfully*.
This is not Ann Arbor.

Have fun. Be safe.

TRU: on the A2/Detroit rapid transit study

We could always turn the old MCRR depot into ... a depot

At recent hearings, SEMCOG shows that among options they have studied, a commuter rail line has the shortest travel time and lowest capital cost as well as low operating cost.

Transportation Riders United (TRU) has recommended "enhancing the commuter rail option by developing a quality feeder system" to depot districts like Ypsilanti's.

"A hybrid option consisting of commuter rail transit plus a feed system would meet the goals of the project while serving the largest number of people and businesses within one-half mile of a transit station," says Lawrence Hands, treasurer of TRU.

The study's basic commuter rail option consists of operating trains along the Amtrak line between Ann Arbor and Detroit Amtrak stations, with stops in Ypsilanti, on Merriman Road, and at the Dearborn station, TRU's newsletter announced. "We expect that trip time between Ann Arbor and Detroit could be in the range of 50 minutes or less. Trip frequencies of 30 minutes during rush hour and one hour during the day would likely be sufficient to justify the system with quality feeder systems in place."

Locals can imagine buses dropping train passengers off in the district once again.

TRU says community development benefit of fixed rail stations has been well established in cities around the country and world. Each light rail transit station could become the hub for a vibrant, walkable urban village where investment and economic activity are drawn—the permanence of fixed rail provides confidence to developers for market interest.

Rail reduces parking needs, significantly reducing development costs while opening up additional land for development, says the TRU official. "It helps induce reuse of underutilized historic structures located near stations," perhaps even former rail stations, themselves.

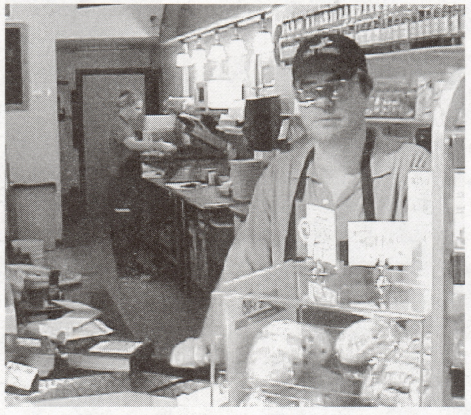
Commuter rail linked with a quality light rail feeder system in the Detroit area—and careful consideration of options in the Ann Arbor area—could be a project that revitalizes Greater Detroit.

Rag readers may sign up for TRU email news alerts by sending a blank email to mailinglist-subsribe@detroit transit.org

Salt City Antiques, 15 East Cross

Carol McEachran started her business in 1980 in Saline. After a ten-year absence, she opened her second store in Depot Town, on March 27, 2004, but kept the name commemorating the great salt marshes that separate Saline and Ypsilanti. She now has twelve dealers exhibiting in her 3200-square-foot space next to the Huron River.

Café Luwak, 42 East Cross



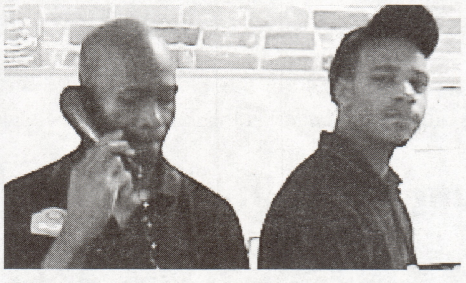
Fritz Passow minds the counter while Allison Ferber builds sandwiches

Finishing the first year of any new business is quite a milestone, but for a restaurant it is a major accomplishment. Looking at February sales, Luwak is on the right track—up 96.2% from last year. With a great number of regular customers who come back daily, weekly, or whenever they are in town, there is real a community atmosphere around the restaurant. "The quality of our sandwiches has never been better," says owner Jim Karnopp. "Our Corned Beef Reuben has been rated #1 in town by our customers, and our turkey and tempeh Reubens are following right behind."

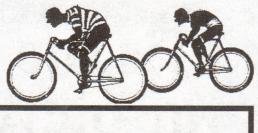
Frenchie's, 58 East Cross

Sidetrack's Linda French not only added patios out the east and south sides of her popular spot by the tracks, but she developed a traditional tavern for private parties right next door. This spot is available for your private party.

Quizno's Subs, 32 East Cross



Curtis Todd has managed Quizno's Subs since it opened here two years ago. He and Sean Smith prepare toasted submarine sandwiches and several creative sides for an active lunch crowd at the district's first national food franchise operation.



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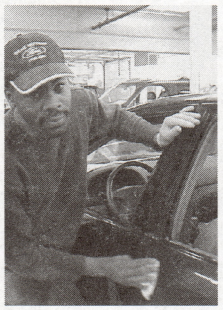
The *Wheels of Life* featured in Depot Town this summer

City Body, 20 East Cross Street



Michael Foster (left) has worked at City Body for 21 years, Walter Ostrowski (right) for 13. Scott and Bruce Sobbry moved their auto business to Depot Town from Stony Creek in Augusta Township in 1987.

The Gifted Basket, 35 East Cross

Kim Tucker spent 25 years in human relations for the high tech telecommunications industry on the West Coast before buying The Gifted Basket. In Depot Town, she started out as an upstairs operation, finally moving to the street level to create her unique gift packages.

Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum *-Erin Richie*

The building that is now the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum was built in 1892 for the Ypsilanti Electric Company. In the early 1900's it was home to the Michigan Crown Fender Company. Then a Dodge Brother dealership took over the building from 1916 to 1926. Soon Willys-Overland Agency had the building from 1928 to 1929.

Later on it became a Hudson franchise (chain) around 1930 when Longnecker & Crossman, Ypsilanti's Hudson dealer gave up their big new building built in 1927 because of the Depression, and moved to Cross Street where rent was only $25.00 a month.

Then Carl L. Miller (my Great-Grandfather) got the Hudson franchise in 1933. His partner was Alex Longnecker until 1944 when he bought him out.

In the best of times he had seven employees, there were five in the shop and two salesmen, one was Carl Miller.

In 1956 Hudson Sales and Service became Miller Motor Sales. In 1957 it became an American Motors Corporation (AMC) dealership. AMC wanted them to build a fancier building but Carl Miller liked the old one. AMC told him to make the fancy building or they would take away the franchise. Carl Miller told them to keep their franchise.

After that they sold used cars and did repair work until Carl Miller died in 1973. Then Jack Miller (my Great Uncle), Carl's son, took over the business.

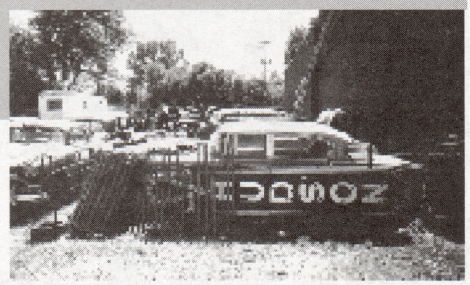
Main entrance to the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection.

Jack Miller was the President of the Essex Hudson Terraplane Club from 1978–1982. In 1984 the building was the World's Last Hudson Dealership.

On April 25, 1997 the dealership became the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection a division of the Ypsilanti Historical Society that was founded by my Great Grandmother Phoebe M. Miller (Carl Miller's wife). Jack Miller became the curator.

In March 2003 it was no longer part of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and became its own historical place that it is today.

[Erin Richie is a fifth grader at Erickson Elementary. She will be eleven years old this month, but wrote her story at age 8.]



The same space in 1991. There are still Hudsons around, but they're inside the museum now and a "sister" of the historic sign hangs on the west gable of the museum.

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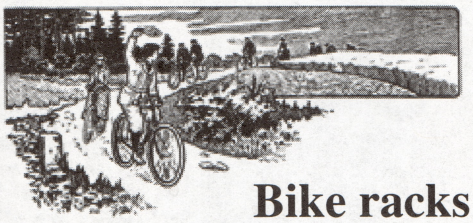

Ypsilanti Health Coalition places six new bike racks on the block; positive effect on health featured

Bike racks installed and dedicated

Michigan's surgeon general Kimberly Dawn Wisdom, MD, visited Depot Town April 3rd for a ceremonial ribbon-cutting for the newly-installed bike racks to celebrate National Public Health Week.

Lily Guzman, spokesperson for the Ypsilanti Health Coalition, says, "Six racks were installed in Depot Town: in front of Gordon's Five & Dime, Frenchie's, Esquire Interiors, and Paula's Barber Shop. Two more will be installed near the Farmers' Market and Freighthouse in the Market Plaza"

"This is part of a larger effort," says Guzman, "to install a total of 25 bike racks in Ypsilanti, providing bike parking for 50 bicycles. Other locations include the Michigan Avenue downtown business district, Riverside Park, Parkridge Community Center, Rutherford Community Pool, and other popular community destinations. The Ypsilanti Health Coalition has been working with local officials to choose the above locations."

The Ypsilanti Health Coalition (YHC) is providing funding for the racks with program funding provided through Washtenaw Steps Up.

Jean Horak, Volunteer Coordinator at Hope Clinic, says, "Installing these bike racks is really a first step in trying to encourage Ypsi residents to bike more and future ideas include advocating for bike trails and paths, creating more organized family biking opportunities, potentially helping to provide easier, more affordable access to bicycles for low income residents and families, and educating kids and the community on bike safety."

"Biking is a form of physical activity that is both fun and sustainable so we hope that by encouraging children and families to engage in bicycling there will be a positive effect on the health of Ypsilanti residents."

Depot Town Rag

Volume 14, Number 11 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

"All the news that fits, we print"
A monthly publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc., a non-profit incorporation
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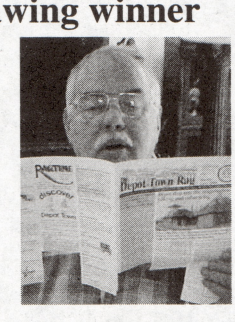
thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Pattie Harrington, Vice President
Ray Strassel, Treasurer
Sandee French,
Secretary & Past President
Kim Tucker,
Marketing Committee chair
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Harrington's Standard Printing, 120 East Cross Street.

Rag's first drawing winner



Maxe Obermeyer won 25 Depot Town Bucks in last month's drawing, but says he could not read his *Rag* after cutting out the cool coupons for even more savings.

Museum attractions abound here

Things old and much loved—cars, toys, firetrucks, airplanes, Grandma's place—find a comfortable home here. Our history is all around us down in Depot Town.

Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection & Miller Motors

100-113 East Cross Street 734.482.5200
Apex, Ace, Tucker, Corvair, Hudson

Michigan Antique Fire Equipment Museum

110 West Cross Street, 734.547.0663
Fire engines, ladders, bells, emblems, patches, extinguishers, clothng, hats, helmets, toys, pictures

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Ypsilanti Historical Museum & Archives

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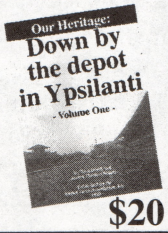
Shocking history and true tales of the old neighborhood

174 pages of history and photos from the earliest days to nearly last week



Available at Quinn's Essentials and Gordon's Five & Dime

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What Lies Beneath:
Exploring the Depot Town underground

The sordid—and slightly embellished—story of the district's fabled tunnels that could connect with Oprah's book club. Underpasses, subways, shafts, burrows, holes, mines, and chambers in Ypsi.

It seems every time someone digs a hole around here, the ground caves in and they find themselves in an ancient subterranean cavern of some sort. The rehabbing of downtown Ypsilanti's two major parking lots last summer uncovered previously unknown "chambers"—and the resulting delay in filling them in nearly put some of the merchants out of business in the process.

Years ago, excavators were amazed to find underground rooms near Beyer Hospital and under Michigan Avenue intersections. When City contractors installed the first water line to the Freighthouse in the Seventies, an arched brick passageway was uncovered, causing building owners and residents to point out tunnel entrances in their basements—an oddity they had taken for granted for many years.

"House tracks" from MCRR's main rail line cut between the nineteenth century hotels and their kitchens, resulting in underground connections to their dining rooms.

Smithsonian magazine, in a September 2004 article on the tunnels beneath Naples, Italy, posits that every town has hidden underground spaces and they trace Naples' chambers to Greek and Roman times.

Ypsi's tunnels are often attributed to the Underground Railroad, even through many post date the period of aiding runaway slaves in the escape to Canada (*see supplment*).

A *Rag* story from nearly twenty years ago actually claimed the district's tunnels reached to rhinestone mines, costume caches, and furniture deposits sacked away before they qualified as antiques. No one seemed to believe any of this conjecture, but new tunnel tales cropped up anyway.

"What lies..."

In an age when we see daily lies about sex and violence in the national media, a headline such as "What lies beneath..." might easily be misinterpreted but, on second look, real subterranean chambers beneath local communites such as Depot Town elicit lies and fabrications as well.

The history of America's Underground Railroad movement is difficult to document because in much of the nineteenth century it was counter to Federal law to assist runaway slaves in their flight to freedom. Northern "conductors" broke those laws and lied to cover up a patriotism that superceded what they perceived as unjust laws.

Since tales of aiding slaves fleeing to Ontario, Canada, are difficult to prove, many have been embellished with good itention and a few cop the "alleged to be" prefix when relating local responsibility.

Mostly, stories about hidden chambers grow out of street talk and rumor and, as years pass and stories continue, it becomes more difficult to trace any real facts to a primary source. This block's urban folklore includes tales of new Pontiac automobiles washing down the Huron River in a flood, opening rail cars to find a dozen Edsels waiting all these years on a side track, gambling dens for off-track betting, and caches of Canadian whiskey secreted away since Prohibition.

Such story-telling seems natural and welcome in a neighborhood where people still talk to each other and enjoy their coloful pasts—real or imagined.

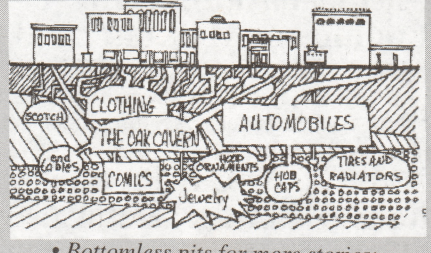
Heard any good ones lately? Pass them on to our editor and see them here next issue.

Special insert with this issue
An 1885 interview: First-person memories of the Underground Railroad

Ypsilanti's captions more fun than those in *Smithsonian*

At right and below:
• During the 1852 secession from West Ypsilanti, east side families lived beneath the depot district to escape the wrath of A2 wannabees.
• A few early residents are still on exhibit.

• Long thought to be a waiting room for the Underground Railroad, this chamber is now attributed to ancient Greek exploration—long before the time of Demetrius Ypsilanti.



• Bottomless pits for more stories: Reports in these pages more than twenty years ago credited the district's tunnels with the wealth of treasures offered in the shops above.

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Pirates @ 89.5 FM!

89.5 FM has a steady diet of Doo-Wop and Rock punctuated by spots of "Radio Depot Town" with no call letters. The station's few commercials sound a lot like the same loyal folks whose ads are seen in this little print publication.

Mysteriously private, the new station runs interviews with "Johnny Dangerous" and other characters not easily identified.

Some clues to 89.5 FM's origins come from the *Ypsi Dixit* Internet blog:

"It is indeed of the pirate variety," says Johnny. "The feds aren't granting any new licenses so unless one wants to submit to the whims of rich station owners and help them produce bad radio programming, this is the only other route. The station's physical location is not relevant."

"The station sounds better than other 'pirate' attempts," he notes, "because we're correct in the technical sense, using properly adjusted modern commercial equipment. It doesn't hurt that I am a broadcast engineer, either...."

Radio Depot Town's signal fades quickly as the listerner approaches leaves the Cross and River Street area, but it's loud and clear down in Depot Town.

This ain't Ann Arbor

1. No moldy sofa on the front porch.
2. We keep our naked people indoors.
3. We admit it; we have trailer parks too.
4. No crowds of stoned teenagers on April Fools' (Hash Bash) Day.
5. College students cross the streets just like "regular" people.
6. You can get an unexpurgated crime report from the YPD dispatcher.
7. There's no big box super store mall to get homogenized into.
8. Cable TV does not feature those snappy City Council and School Board meetings
9. "The University" does not tear down all the cool buildings in town.
10. Nobody applauds when the Detroit/Chicago trains come through (we're so cool, we pretend we don't notice).

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Depot Town
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May 6

Ypsi Street Rods Show

Local dudes and dudettes show their four-wheeled stuff on the streets of their own hometown and in Riverside Park

May 20

Ypsi PRIDE Day

In a town of both long and instant traditions, most have forgotten what the PRIDE acronym meant in the first place, but we show up with garden tools in hand nonetheless to clean up the place. (People Restoring Image and Developing the Evironment)

May 21

Michigan Vintage Volkswagen Club in Riverside Park

May 29

Memorial Day Parade

Stops for services on Memorial Bridge (see historic WWI markers), then up the hill to Highland Cemetery

June 4

Orphan Car Show

Sponsored by the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection in cooperation with the City of Ypsilanti and sponsored by the Walter P. Chrysler Museum. More info: 734-482-5200. (Chrysler's mom once ran a rooming house on River Street. Welcome back, Walt.)

June 7-September 14

Depot Town Cruise Nights

Every Thursday night—all summer long

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Etch your name in Ypsilanti history!

Depot Town Brick Campaign Phase 4

More bricks are coming!

Personalized bricks will be used to create pathways next to both Aubree's Saloon and Quinn's Essentials. Preserve your memory or honor someone with a personalized brick.

Purchase bricks at Cady's, Aubree's, Gordon's Five & Dime, The Gifted Basket, and Garrett's Florist.

More info: Kathie Garrett at kathie@garrettlandscape.com or at Garrett's Florist (734) 480-0022

A display will be installed for viewing at Garrett's Florist, 950 N. River Street. Updates can be found on the Depot Town Website: www.depottown.org.

Bricks will be installed as early as this summer. Check the Website for updates! Funds will enhance Depot Town by creating traffic-calming crosswalks at the intersections of Rice & Cross and Ninde & Cross.

Host hotel for Depot Town events at Michigan Elvisfest 2006

Marriott

YPSILANTI AT EAGLE CREST

Quinn's Essentials

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AN 1885 INTERVIEW:
MEMORIES OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Participant memoirs from the era of the Underground Railroad in Michigan are disappointingly scarce. The railroad's "agents" —benign conspirators who sped desperate passengers along the route to Canada—dissolved their "company" when the Civil War ended. Written records there were none, and soon memories began to die with their keepers. Two decades after the end of the conflict that abolished slavery, the Ann Arbor Courier *took up this neglected subject, in an issue dated May 13, 1885. But the* Courier *story was not original, nor did it have a local focus. Instead, the Ann Arbor weekly cribbed an interview that had been published earlier in the* Battle Creek Call *—and carelessly omitted the date of its appearance in that sheet. The interview, with former Battle Creek "station agent" Erastus Hussey, does name Washtenaw County sympathizers Samuel W. Dexter, Theodore Foster, Guy Beckley and John Geddes, and recalls a couple of harrowing episodes in the history of this conspiratorial movement. "I could tell you hundreds of interesting incidents," says Hussey in conclusion. Alas, his unambitious interrogator did not seize upon the invitation, so Hussey took those stories to the grave.*

—Ann Arbor historian Wystan Stevens

Here is the story from
The Ann Arbor Courier, May 13, 1885:

IN SLAVE DAYS.

History of the Underground Railroad.

An institution which will soon only be known in history is the Underground Railroad. Few people even to-day have any idea of its purpose and workings, although it ceased its operations but a few years ago, when the emancipation proclamation was issued. The active agents of the Underground Railroad, who were all prominent actors in the great anti-slavery cause, are fast passing away, and their death will then leave history to tell of its noble work and what it accomplished.

The only person now living in Battle Creek who was actively connected with the Underground Railroad is the Hon. Erastus Hussey. This venerable gentleman was the agent for Battle Creek and kept the station here. He was one of the best known and most prominent Underground Railroad agents in Michigan, and an active and zealous anti-slavery man. If there is any one person to whom the colored people owe an everlasting debt of gratitude it is Mr. Hussey—the Abolition patriarch.

Realizing the importance of preserving all knowledge possible to be obtained regarding this institution, the *Call* man visited Mr. Hussey and made known his errand. That gentleman expressed a willingness to impart to the scribe a history of the Underground Railroad.

"The Underground Railway," commenced Mr. Hussey, "came into existence in 1840, in the midst of the Harrison [Presidential] campaign. It was a league of men who organized a system of conducting runaway slaves from Kentucky and other slave states to Canada. There were men who devoted their time in assisting the slaves across the Ohio river near Cincinnati, and then sent them from station to station until they arrived in Canada. There were several branches of the Underground Railway. I was connected with the Central Michigan route, which run through Ohio, Indiana and Michigan."

"Mr. Hussey, when and how did you first connect yourself with the Underground Railway?"

"It was in 1840. One day when I was in Detroit a man by the name of John Cross, of Indiana, called at my house and inquired for me. He was very anxious to see me, but would not even tell my wife what he wanted. My wife sent for Benjamin Richard, who worked for Jonathan Hart, but neither would he confide the object of his visit to him, and so departed. I was in Detroit three or four days. After I returned home I received a letter from Cross. He informed me he was establishing a route from Kentucky to Canada, through which escaped slaves could be conducted without molestation, and wanted me to take charge of the station at Battle Creek. This was the first that I ever heard of the Underground Railway. Cross' letter I preserved for many years, but it is now lost. This is how I commenced to keep the station here."

"Were you assisted by others?"

"At the time there were only five anti-slavery men in Battle Creek besides myself: Silas W. Dodge, Abel Densmore, Henry Willis, Theron A. Chadwick and Samuel Strauther, a colored man. Others came to this place afterwards, however."

"Why was it called the Underground Railway?"

"Because of the secret manner in which the slaves were carried through; it did not come in sight of men. They went through very secretly. They went as if carried through a hollow tube without being seen. Everything connected with it was conducted in the greatest secrecy. Men brought the slaves across the Ohio river in row boats. They deviated on the Ohio river, but ultimately came together on the main line on this side of the river, and were then conducted through Indiana and Michigan. Stations were established every fifteen or sixteen miles, in charge of good, true men. The fugitives were secreted in the day time and carried through in the night."

"Did the men who kept the stations get any pay?"

"No. It was all without money and without price. It was all out of sympathy for the colored people and for principle. We were working for humanity."

"Where was your station located?"

"My dwelling house was the station, although I often secreted the fugitives in other places. After the Union block was built I often secreted them there. At that time I lived in the building which stood upon the present site of the Werstein & Halliday block, opposite the Williams House. Before the present block was erected the old building was occupied as a livery stable by J. L. Reade. There was Battle Creek's Underground Railway station. This building was erected by August P. Rawson, in 1836 or '37, and when I bought it it was occupied as a cabinet shop by John Caldwell. I repaired the building and occupied the front as a store, and used the up-stairs and rear end for my dwelling."

"You afterwards moved into the house which was on the present site of the Adventists' college, did you not?"

"Yes, but that was in 1855. We did not assist so many fugitives then, as they went over a shorter route through Ohio, by way of Sandusky, and thence to Malden."

"I have heard it stated, Mr. Hussey, that the cellar under the house which stood on the site of the Adventist college was built on purpose as a secreting place for escaped slaves."

"So it was reported when the house was removed. But that was not strictly true. There were very few coming through at that time, but I will guarantee, however, that if any slaves were secreted there they were never captured."

"Where were the stations through Michigan located.[?]"

"Well, let's see. I can't tell about the stations in Indiana. The route came in this state near Cassopolis, in the famous Quaker settlement. There was that good old Quaker, Zachariah Sugard. There were several besides him, among whom were Stephen Bogue and Joel East. At Cassopolis Parker Osburn was the agent. The next station that I remember of was Schoolcraft, in charge of Dr. Nathan M. Thomas, who, I believe, lives there yet. Then came Climax. The sta-

tion was a little ways out of the village. The man there was Gardner. I think his name was William. Battle Creek came next. Jabez Fitch was the agent at Marshall. He was a gentleman with means and who stood high in the community. He was the first nominee on the Liberty ticket for Governor. Of course he was not elected, but we always thereafter called him Governor Fitch. Then came Albion and Edwin M. Johnson. At Parma I forget the name of the agent, but I think that it was Townsend E. Gidley. He was not strictly identified with the Liberty party, but always rendered assistance in furthering the escape of fugitive slaves. At Jackson there were three men: Lonson Wilcox, Norman Allen and one I cannot remember. In the larger places we had more than one man, so that if one chanced to be out of town the other man would be found. At Michigan Centre Abijah Fitch was the agent. He was a gentleman of high standing. Fitch was one of the men who was involved in litigation many years ago with the Michigan Central railroad company called the 'railroad war,' which was a famous case at that time. A feeling was created against the road on account of the number of cattle killed, there being no fences then. A number of men threw stones through the car windows. Several of them were sent to state prison. At the trial of the case John Van Arman made one of his most famous pleas. It took place in Detroit, and was pronounced by Wm. H. Seward to be one of the most eloquent speeches that he ever heard.

"The next station was Leoni. I have forgotten the name of the agent, also the one at Grass Lake. At Fraciscoville it was Francisco himself, who was a good worker. At Dexter we had Samuel W. Dexter and his two sons. At Scio was a prominent man — Theodore Foster. At Ann Arbor was Guy Beckley, editor of the *Signal of Liberty*, who published the paper in connection with Theodore Foster. At Geddes was John Geddes, after whom the place was named, and who built a large flouring mill there. He was a brother of the late Paul Geddes, of this city, and uncle of A. H. Geddes. I can't tell the name of the agent at Ypsilanti or Plymouth. At the former place the route left the Michigan Central and branched off to Plymouth. Sometimes they went to Plymouth from Ann Arbor. From Plymouth they followed the river Rouge to Swartsburg, thence to Detroit. The principal man there was Horace Hallock, also Silas M. Holmes and Samuel Zug. These three were men who could be relied upon."

"Did you have a system of pass-words?"

"Yes. We had words that we used. The most common pass-word was 'Can you give shelter and protection to one or more persons?' This was addressed to the agent by the person looking for a place of safety."

"Did you drive the fugitives through to Marshall yourself?"

"Sometimes I did, but often I got some person to go for me. Isaac Mott, then a boy working for me, used frequently to take them through to Marshall. Sometimes others went. I used my own horse and wagon."

"Have you any idea how many fugitives you assisted through?"

"I have fed and given protection to over 1,000 fugitives, and assisted them on to Canada."

"How long after your station was established before your first fugitives arrived?"

"In four weeks after John Cross was here two men came. By-the way, I never met Cross until eight years afterward, at the great Free Soil Convention in Buffalo. The two men above referred to were Wm. Coleman and Stephen Wood. These men came through under fictitious names, and always retained those names. The fugitives very frequently did that. Stephen Wood was shot and wounded in his attempt to escape. Dr. Thayer took thirteen large shot out of his shoulder."

"How did the slaves act generally when they had arrived this far on their escape?"

"Some were frightened, while others were full of courage."

"How many usually came at a time?"

"From one to four. At one time there were forty-five fugitives in one night. It was after an attempt to capture the slaves at the Quaker settlement in Cass county. One night a man by the name of Richard Dillingham came to my house and informed me that there would be forty-five fugitives and nine guards here in two hours. What to do I did not know. My wife was sick-a-bed. The first man I met was Abel Densmore, then S. M. Dodge and Samuel Strauther. Lester Buckley owned a small, unoccupied dwelling house in the rear of the lot where J. M. Caldwell's store now stands. I went to see him and told him of my predicament, and said that I wanted to rent the dwelling for twenty-four hours, and may be for a week. He said: 'You may have it.' Buckley was a Whig, but sympathized with us. There happened to be a stove in the house. I got some wood, then went over to Elijah T. Mott's mill, on the site of the present Titus & Hicks mill, and he gave me sixty pounds of flour. Silas Dodge went to a grocery and got some potatoes, and Densmore got some pork. We heard them coming over the old West Main street bridge. Everybody had heard of their coming, and every man, woman and child were out upon the street, and it looked as if a circus was coming to town. The people got up quite an interest in them. It was a lovely moonlight night. There were nine whitemen with them, who acted as guards. Ahead of them rode Zach Sugard, with his broad-brimmed, white quaker hat, and mounted upon a fine horse — he always had good horses. He met me in front of my house and shook hands with me. I told him of my arrangements. He took off his white hat, and with a military air and voice said: 'Right about face!' They all about faced and marched down to the house and took possession. The nine white men stopped at the hotel, and the people cared for their horses. The fugitives had a jolly good time that night. They cooked their own supper of bread, potatoes and pork, and as they were very hungry they relished it keenly. The next morning about half of them went on to Canada. Others followed afterwards. Among those who remained in Battle Creek were William Casey, Perry Sandford, Jos. Skipworth, Thomas Henderson and others I have forgotten."

"There did not many stay here in 1850, when the fugitive slave law was passed, did they?"

"All went to Canada except Wm. Casey, Perry Sanford, Tom Henderson and Joseph Skipworth."

"Did you ever get into any trouble?"

"No. I expected every day to be arrested, but I escaped all legal proceedings."

"Were you ever disturbed by the slave-catchers?"

"Once word came that thirty armed men were on their way here to capture the slaves in Battle Creek. Dr. Thayer and I printed 500 hand bills, stating that we were prepared to meet them, and that they had better stay away from Battle Creek. Some persons condemned this very much. Dr. Moffit said that it was treason against the government. I sent the bills along the road by an express messenger by the name of Nichols, who was in sympathy with us, and with whom I was acquainted. He threw them off at every station. At Niles, he met the party on the train coming east. The slave-catchers read the bills and turned back. They said that there was no use of going to Battle Creek."

"I suppose Battle Creek was well-known to the slave dealer as a place of refuge for fugitives?"

"The quaker settlement in Cass county and the stations at Schoolcraft and Battle Creek were well-known all through the south as the head-quarters for escaped slaves, and the names of the men who kept the station were also known to them."

"I suppose that you met with many strange incidents?"

"Certainly. One day a slave woman who was assisting my family, and had been here about a week, when a party of slaves drove up. Among the number was a daughter whom she had not seen in ten years. The recognition was mutual, and the meeting a very affecting sight. I could tell you hundreds of interesting incidents."

"When did the Underground railway cease its operations?"

"Not until the emancipation proclamation was issued. It was in existence from 1850 [*should read 1840*] to 1865, a period of 25 years. It accomplished a noble work."

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